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# REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS APPOINTED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHERS OF THE MIDDLE STATES AND MARYLAND

The following is the complete report of the above Association's Committee appointed in 1913, consisting of W. A. Hervey (Chairman), Columbia University; Isabelle Bronk, Swarthmore College, Frederick S. Hemry, Tome Institute; Carl A. Krause, Jamaica High School; L. A. Roux, Newark Academy.

Parts I and III dealing with the Questionnaire sent out by the Committee were presented at the annual meeting held in November, 1915; Part II was read by the Chairman at the meeting held in November, 1916, at Baltimore.

## REPORT OF 1915

In accordance with instructions received at the last annual meeting, and with due consideration of the discussion of the report submitted at that time (for summary of report and discussion, see *Proceedings*, 1914, pp. 5-16), the Committee formulated a revised plan for an Aural and Oral Test for admission to college in French, German and Spanish. This plan has been submitted for criticism to about one thousand public and private secondary schools in the Middle States and Maryland, including all that are members of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools. Through the courtesy of the principal a letter was sent to about fifteen hundred modern language teachers in these schools, reviewing the work of the Committee from the beginning in 1913, setting forth the present plan, and calling attention to the endorsement given by the colleges of the Middle States and Maryland to the recommendation of the Association of Modern Language Teachers that Aural and Oral Tests for admission to college be established. The letter was accompanied by (1) a copy of the *Proceedings* for 1914, (2) printed specimen examination papers in Elementary and Intermediate French and German, to show how the plan could be put into operation, and (3) a detailed question-

naire requesting (i) the opinion of the teachers as to the establishment of the proposed test and their criticism of the plan and the specimen papers submitted; (ii) information as to their present methods of instruction as related to the preparation of pupils for such tests; (iii) information as to the preparation and experience of modern language teachers and suggestions for the improvement of prevailing methods of their training.\* A similar letter, with specimen examination papers, was sent to the members of Modern Language Departments in the colleges, normal schools and universities of the Middle States and Maryland. This letter urged that action be taken by the respective faculties establishing a suitable Aural and Oral Test for admission, such as had already been taken by the faculty of Columbia College, and that an effort be made to have such a requirement in force by September, 1917.

The plan submitted by the Committee and illustrated by the accompanying specimen papers, recommended that the colleges establish an Elementary Aural and Oral Test in French, German and Spanish, to be designated French, German or Spanish (*x*), supplementary to the present examination, which is designated (*a*); and an Intermediate Aural and Oral Test in French and German, to be designated French or German (*y*), supplementary to the present examination, which is designated (*b*); the candidates in (*x*) and (*y*) to be examined in groups of not more than seventy-five, in order that the examiner may be heard without difficulty.

The Elementary Test (*x*) to consist of three parts

1. A ten-minute exercise in writing easy French, German or Spanish prose from dictation.

2. Written reproduction, in English, of the content of a short passage in easy French, German or Spanish prose, to be read by the examiner (15 minutes).

3. Written answers, in the respective foreign language, to easy questions read by the examiner in the foreign language, the questions to be of two types: (*a*) On general topics, such as would be used in the elementary practice of the schoolroom. (*b*) On a connected prose passage, to be read by the candidates

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\*Copies of the specimen paper in French, prepared by Mr. Roux, and in German, prepared by Prof. Bagster-Collins, and of the questionnaire, can be had on application to W. A. Hervey, Columbia University.

(and returned) just before the questions are asked. (35 minutes.)

The Intermediate Test (y) likewise to consist of three parts:

1. A ten-minute exercise in writing moderately difficult French or German from dictation.
2. Written reproduction, in the respective foreign language, of the content of a short passage in prose read by the examiner. (30 minutes).
3. Written answers, in the respective foreign language, to questions read by the examiner in the foreign language: (a) On general topics, chosen from a list to be announced beforehand. (b) On a connected prose passage, to be read by the examiner just before the questions are asked (30 minutes).

It will be noted that no actual *oral* test is included in this examination, but it seems certain that no candidate could pass it who had not received abundant oral, as well as aural, training. In the earlier plan it was proposed to have, instead of Part III, an individual test in pronunciation and "speaking", to be administered by the college to which the candidate might later seek admission. The discussion last year brought out serious objections to the postponement of this test in the case of candidates taking the examinations of the College Entrance Examination Board or the New York State Education Department. The letter pointed out that colleges conducting their own examinations can readily substitute for Part III such an individual test, or in other cases require a supplementary test in pronunciation if they find it expedient. Colleges admitting on certificate will of course adapt the aural and oral requirement to this procedure. It would seem that Parts I and II could be covered by the certification of accredited schools, particularly if properly corrected and endorsed exercises in dictation and reproduction were submitted, as is done with laboratory note-books. The necessity for a somewhat lenient administration of an aural and oral requirement in the beginning was emphasized, as was the obligation that would rest upon the colleges to make their own elementary instruction conform to the new program and, in so far as they undertake the training of teachers to fit recruits for the staff of the secondary school under the new standard.

In the matter of credit, it is recommended that no increase or division of the present unit-allowance be made. The Aural and

Oral Test should, however, be made a separate part of the respective subject, so that it will be possible to condition a candidate in that part only, as is now done in the divisions of Elementary Latin. That is, Elementary French should include French *a* and French *x*, and should count two units, as now; Intermediate French should include French *b* and French *y*, and should count one unit. It does not seem necessary to extend the new requirement to Advanced French and German, counting a fourth unit, provided the Intermediate requirement is prerequisite. It should be noted that the proposed *x* and *y* examinations will necessarily test the candidate's ability to write the foreign language and that accordingly the composition of the *a* and *b* examinations will naturally be reduced.

The inquiry addressed to the secondary teachers was wholly impersonal, neither their names nor the location of their schools being given in the replies. These have been classified, more or less approximately, by states, New York City alone being reported separately. The Committee is greatly indebted to the secondary teachers for the accurate and suggestive information furnished. Considering the labor involved in examining the material and filling out the lengthy questionnaire we are well satisfied with the result; namely, replies from 260 teachers in 206 schools. (Some twenty replies were received too late for inclusion in this report.) The number of votes was 292, some of the teachers representing more than one of the three languages. The distribution of schools among the several states, and particularly among the communities of different size within these states, indicates that the expression of opinion is thoroughly representative. The total secondary school attendance in the Middle States and Maryland represented in 168 of the 206 schools from which replies were received (the figures for 38 schools missing) is 115,698; the pupils immediately affected (in French, German and Spanish) number 54,746. With allowance for the 38 additional schools, it is probable that the replies received represent at least three-fourths of the total secondary school attendance in this territory. Table I indicates the number of schools, the total enrollment, and the attendance in French, German and Spanish, as given for the 168 schools (of the total 206) which furnished information on this point.

TABLE I

ENROLLMENT IN 168 SCHOOLS (OF 206; NOT REPORTED IN 38)

	Total Number Reported		FRENCH		GERMAN		SPANISH		Total No. Pupils in		
	Sch'ls	Pupils	Sch'ls	Pupils	Sch'ls	Pupils	Sch'ls	Pupils	Fr.	Gr.	Sp
N. Y. City	27	52,933	12	3,835	21	24,984	4	1248	30,067		
N. Y. State	71	20,174	20	1,481	63	4,630	4	34	6,145		
N. J. . . . .	36	25,843	13	1,998	30	7,685	1	13	9,696		
Pa. . . . .	23	13,838	9	1,251	21	5,876	3	205	7,332		
Md. . . . .	8	2,743	4	569	8	815	2	7	1,391		
Del. & D. C	3	167	1	70	3	45	—	—	115		
	168	115,698	59	9,204	146	44,035	14	1,507	54,746		

The essential portions of the questions in Part I follow. The distribution of answers among men and women and among teachers of French, German and Spanish, is shown in Table II. The vote on Questions 1 and 2 is given in Table III. The answers to Question 4 have been given in Table I. The more important opinions and suggestions elicited by Questions 2 and 3 will be treated below.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE—PART I—THE PROPOSED AURAL AND ORAL TEST

1. Do you think that the college entrance examination should include, as outlined in the accompanying letter and specimen papers (a) an Elementary Aural and Oral Test in French, German, Spanish? . . . . . (b) an Intermediate Aural and Oral Test in French and German? . . . . . Why, or why not? . . . . .

2. Can your pupils, in your judgment, be satisfactorily prepared for such tests? . . . . . If not, what particular difficulties make it impossible? . . . . .

3. What modifications of the proposed form of Aural and Oral Test do you suggest? . . . . .

4. How many high school pupils attend your school this year? . . . . . How many pupils take French? . . . . . German? . . . . . Spanish? . . . . .

TABLE II—DISTRIBUTION OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONNAIRE—PART I

Answers—				Teachers	Votes	
From men teaching French only . . . . .				14		
“	women	“	“	34	48	48
“	men	“	German “	52		
“	women	“	“ “	124	176	176
“	men	“	Spanish “	5		
“	women	“	“ “	2	7	7
“	men	“	two (of F., G., S.) . . . . .	12		
“	women	“	“ “	14	26	52
“	men	“	three (F., G., S.) . . . . .	1		
“	women	“	“ “	2	3	9
					260	292

TABLE III—SUMMARY OF VOTES—PART I

Question 1—		N.Y.C.	N.Y.S.	N.J.	Pa.	Md.	Del.&D.C.	Total
No. of teachers . . . . .		53	95	57	38	13	4	260
El. French	Yes	13	18	17	13	5	1	67
	No	1	5	3	1	1	1	11—78
Int. “	Yes	13	17	20	12	5	1	68
	No	1	6	..	2	1	..	10—78
El. German	Yes	35	74	39	27	10	3	188
	No	1	6	1	1	1	..	10—198
Int. “	Yes	36	71	39	23	8	3	180
	No	..	9	1	5	3	..	18—198
Spanish	Yes	6	4	1	2	2	..	15
	No	..	..	..	1	..	..	1—16
Question 2—								
French	Yes	13	20	20	13	6	1	73
	No	1	3	..	1	..	..	5—78
German	Yes	36	75	37	27	11	3	189
	No	..	5	3	1	..	..	9—198
Spanish	Yes	6	4	1	2	2	..	15
	No	..	..	..	1	..	..	1—16

The questions in Part III were designed to ascertain the teacher's preparation and experience in the following respects: (1) Whether teaching in a public or a private school, and in towns of what size. (2) Number of years' experience. (3) Birthplace, country; if foreign-born, age at coming to the United States. (4) Birthplace of parents. (5) General education, certificates and degrees received. (6) Special study of the foreign language in this country or abroad. (7) Satisfactory opportunity in secondary, collegiate, normal or university training for (a) practice in oral reading and pronunciation; (b) hearing the foreign language spoken; (c) practice in speaking the foreign language; (d) study of phonetics; (e) special study of the history and geography of the respective foreign country; (f) study of methods of teaching the foreign language to secondary pupils; (g) practice teaching, with criticism. (8) The teacher's own estimate of his ability to pronounce (in reading), understand and speak the foreign language.

Answers.—Of the 260 teachers (84 men, 176 women), all left one or more of the foregoing questions unanswered, hence the varying totals in the following summary: (1) Of 245, 220 teach in public schools, 20 in private schools. Of 248, 53 teach in New York City, 58 in towns of more than 50,000 population, 19 in towns of more than 25,000, 20 in towns of more than 10,000, 31 in towns of more than 5,000, 67 in towns of less than 5,000. (2) Of 243, 78 have taught less than five years, 95 five to ten years, 70 more than ten years. (3) Of 248, 206 were born in the United States, Canada, or England; 42 in France, Germany, or Switzerland, 12 of these having come to the United States when under 14 years of age, 13 when over 14. Of the 206 born in the United States, 10 had one foreign-born parent, 24 both. (5 and 6) Of 248, 214 have had formal study in this country beyond the secondary school; of the remainder, some (foreign-born) had all their training abroad, a few have had high school training only. Of the 214, 82 had college residence only, 17 normal school only, 115 have had graduate residence. The total number reported as holding a certificate or degree is 189, as follows: Bachelor's degree 170, normal diploma 10, special diploma 9. Of the first group, 54 also have the A.M. degree, 6 the Ph.D. Most of those who studied in college and all who have had graduate study specialized in the foreign language or languages which they are teaching. One



hundred and six have studied abroad for longer or shorter periods—35 in France, 67 in Germany, 4 in Spain. (7) Of 245, 127 had opportunity at some stage of their training for satisfactory practice in oral reading and pronunciation, 177 for hearing the foreign language spoken, practically none (except those who are of foreign parentage or have studied abroad) for practice in speaking. Fifty-one had instruction in phonetics, 3 in the history and geography of the foreign country, 55 in methods; 18 had practice teaching in their preparatory course. (8) Of 230, including 42 foreign-born and 24 with two foreign-born parents, 89 rate their ability to pronounce as excellent, 113 as good, 26 as fair, 2 as poor; 86 rate their ability to understand as excellent, 94 as good, 48 as fair, 2 as poor; 39 rate their ability to speak as excellent, 80 as good, 101 as fair, 10 as poor. Of 95 teachers in New York State, 63 are certified by the State Department of Education as qualified to give oral instruction.

The opinions expressed in answer to Questions 2 and 3 of Part I are in most instances favorable to the proposed examination and to the method indicated by the committee's recommendation and the specimen papers. Among the arguments advanced are the following: Such a requirement will be a spur to teachers and pupils alike, and is the only means to affect a needed improvement in secondary instruction. It is the only fair test of the direct method, which is so much advocated and so little recognized. The schools now doing such work get no credit for it and have to overcome opposition, because it is held to be a useless fad, as proved by the fact that the colleges do not require it. Aural and oral training would insure a real "working vocabulary" and ready use of it; would likewise improve the written work. Apart from the training in the foreign language, this work will afford opportunity for the practice of ear and tongue in general and would be a great aid to the cultivation of accuracy in English reading and pronunciation.

Objections are based upon various grounds: The test would discriminate against pupils who lack ready speech and learn through their eye. It is not worth while, according to certain experts, who are cited; the results are superficial at best; proficiency in this direction is not demanded by American conditions. The colleges utterly neglect aural and oral practice, and the pupil

will soon lose what he may have acquired in the secondary school. Others believe that such training is good for college candidates, useless for other pupils.

Some think that the examinations should be simplified throughout; others, while they may be hard enough now, they should be made more difficult as soon as practicable. The reproduction in English in the elementary requirement is not to be approved; it would be better to have a simpler passage and to require production in the foreign language. Question 3 (b) in the elementary examination is too difficult. Ability to answer questions will depend upon the candidate's "verbal memory." The aural and oral test, if given at all, should be optional, with extra credit.

Some who favor the plan in principle note difficulties in the way of its successful executing. Such are the excessive demands upon teachers, due to large classes (45 or more) or too many classes (*e.g.*, seven). The reading requirement leaves too little time for oral drill. Even when the use of the direct method is approved, the amount of prescribed reading makes its use impossible. Oral drill should be conducted on a laboratory plan, as in the natural sciences. The incompetence of teachers and the half-yearly change of teachers would be serious handicaps. Examinations such as those proposed would not be fair tests because of pupils' nervousness; they should be examined and rated by the regular teachers. Several fear that a requirement of this kind would discourage the study of modern languages. Pupils who now become interested and learn to like the reading of foreign literature would be "frightened away"; they would prefer Latin, "where there is no danger of such a requirement." Modern languages are hard enough to teach now; "don't add new obstacles." This requirement "would give the colleges a new opportunity to domineer over the secondary schools." It is hard enough as it is to get pupils into college, and many more would be kept out by this additional requirement.

#### REPORT OF 1916

On behalf of the Committee on Investigation, Professor Hervey reported that the study of material received in answer to Part II of the Questionnaire sent out in October, 1915, had been completed. It was possible last year to report only on parts I and

III, which dealt, respectively with, the Proposed Oral and Aural Test for College Entrance and with the Preparation and Experience of Secondary Teachers of French, German and Spanish (see *Proceedings* for 1915, page 6ff). The answers to Part II, dealing with Methods of Instruction, were often stereotyped, but contained some interesting suggestions. Since these are incorporated in an article on "Oral Practice," to appear in the December number of THE MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL, it is not necessary to present them here. The statistical portion of the report follows with occasional brief comment.

The questions on Methods concerned (A) Reading of Texts and (B) Practice in Hearing, Speaking and Writing. The essential points of query and the number of answers on each are indicated. The maximum number of teachers answering one or more of these questions is 256, of the 260 who returned the Questionnaire.

(A) *Question 1* (a). Reading of the text in the foreign language: Wholly, 154; partly, 101; not at all, 1. (b) Translation into English: Wholly, 62; partly, 188; not at all, 6. A number of teachers, particularly in city schools, emphasized the importance of translation for the teaching of correct English idiom to pupils of foreign birth or parentage.

*Question 2*. Do you include accuracy of pronunciation in your grading? Yes, 226. No, 30.

3. Do you have practice in sight reading? Yes, 235. No, 21.

(B) *Question 1*. Hearing, *with books closed*, the prepared text read: Text read by teacher only, 66; by fellow-pupils only, 5; by both, 98.

*Question 2*. Questions on the text, asked and answered in the foreign language: Yes, 253. No, 3.

*Question 3*. Such questions also on facts of every-day life, 223; with use of objects, pictures, etc., 182; with use of series (Gouin) method, 61.

*Question 4*. Colloquial phrases and idioms memorized: Yes, 243. No, 13. For testing their use, many teachers recommend the writing and translation into English of original sentences.

*Question 5*. Poems memorized: Yes, 246. No, 10. Tests: 73 by declamation only; 16 by free oral reproduction, 33 by written (free and literal), 124 by both. About twenty teachers have poems sung, singly or in concert. Some teachers, while

believing that poems afford good practice in pronunciation and enunciation, prefer to substitute, in part at least, the memorization of prose passages, as giving better drill in colloquial idiom; likewise free paraphrase of poems rather than declamation.

*Question 6.* Paraphrase in class of short stories or poems read or spoken by the teacher: Yes, 175. No, 17. In first year 56 have the paraphrase written in English, 58 in the foreign language, 43 in both. Second year, 3 in English, 133 in foreign language, 36 in both. Third year, 1 in English, 145 in foreign language, 10 in both.

*Question 7.* Foreign language used by teacher for giving ordinary directions in class: 201 use foreign language, 31 English, 16 both. In grammatical instruction, 119 use English only, 30 the foreign language only, 104 use both (of these some use English first year, the foreign language later).

*Question 8.* Aids in teaching: 92 use wall-maps; 42, pictures; 15, phonetic charts; 2, newspapers; 2, map-drawing; 24, various.

*Question 9.* Material for composition: 235 use translation of English sentences; 215, incomplete foreign language sentences in which inflectional endings, prepositions, etc., are to be supplied; 173, paraphrase of a foreign language passage by means of printed or dictated questions covering its contents; 213 use free composition, mostly in third year.

*Question 10.* Dictation exercises: Yes, 234. No, 22. The majority of teachers have pupils correct by use of blackboard, but about sixty do all the correcting themselves, many of these marking the individual exercises at home.

*Question 11.* As other means for practice in hearing and speaking the foreign language: 12 use the phonograph; 87 have foreign language clubs, 51 theatricals, 15 song practice; 5 give magic lantern talks, 2 use games in class instruction. One teacher has one or more pupils daily tell a three-minute story, selected from material provided for this purpose; another has reports on current news items or advertisements from a foreign language newspaper, jokes from a humorous magazine, etc.

A large number of the secondary teachers who returned the questionnaire took great pains to make a real contribution, in one way or another, to the Committee's inquiry and we take occasion to express again our sense of indebtedness for this aid,

without which, indeed, our whole labor would have been in vain.

The Committee believe that the results of the investigation now concluded make it clear that this Association should urge upon the colleges more strongly than ever the necessity of establishing oral and aural tests for admission. A new letter of inquiry has lately been sent to the colleges in the Middle States and Maryland, to ascertain the steps taken in this direction, and calling attention to the announcement of such tests by Cornell, Hamilton, Princeton and Columbia, beginning 1917 or 1918. It is of the utmost importance that the College Entrance Examination Board administer such tests, but while that body gives hearty approval to the establishment of such an entrance requirement, the technical difficulties in securing absolute uniformity of tests have hitherto prevented favorable action. Another difficulty seems to be presented to colleges which admit by certificate. The Committee believe that it may be possible to work out a plan whereby laboratory note-books would be accepted from accredited schools in lieu of the aural test, at least. These are some of the problems that remain to be studied.

The foregoing report was accepted, by unanimous vote. The thanks of the Association were expressed to Professor Hervey, who retires as chairman of the committee, but remains a member of it.